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GLENN'S SERIES OF

STANDARD AND MINOR PLAYS.

No. 102.

"THE MISSOURI EDITOR;"

A 3-Act Comedy-Drama

—BY—

M. S. GLENN.

JAN 38 1896

With Caste of Characters, Entrances and Exits, Relative Positions of the Performers, Description of Costumes, and the whole of the Stage Business carefully marked out.

Price 25 Cents.

MOUNTAIN GROVE, MO.
GLENN PUBLISHING CO.

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COSTUMES—MODERN.

TIME IN PLAYING—ABOUT 2 HOURS.

—o—

MOUNTAIN GROVE, MO.
GLENN PUBLISHING CO.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Jeptha Spongehead,	The Editor from "Ole Mizzuri."
Jake Spriggins,	- - the "Devil."
Hurrah Smith,	- . Bound for Oklahoma.
Farmer Cornstalk,	- with a sack of pe-turnips.
Robt. Sanderson,	- Jep's N. Y. nephew.
Flip Brandon,	the city man whom Jep flogs to a finish.
Will Ketchem,	- - the Constable.
Gus Trenkle,	the baker.
	the robber.
Harry Jones,	the tramp.
	depty constable
Matilda Spongehead,	Jeptha's wife.
Police, Servant, etc.	

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ACT I.

Scene 1. Printing office in country. Editor seated at an old table or box, head bowed, writing vigorously. The "Devil" setting type at an old dilapidated case. Loafer reading paper, etc.

Tilda. (Out-side) Jeptha!

Jeptha. (Writes and reads a few words thoughtfully.)

Tilda. Out-side, but nearer.) Jeptha, oh Jep!

Jeptha. What is it dear? (Continues to write.)

Tilda. (Out-side yet.) Where is the tack hammer?

Jeptha. (Still writing.) It's where you left it when you used it last, dear.

Enter, Tilda, C.

Well, I declare. I've looked under the bed and in all the clothes presses and I can't find that measly tack hammer.

Jeptha. (Continues to write, deeply absorbed.)

Tilda. (Sternly.) Jeptha, do you hear what I'm saying?

Jeptha. (Writing.) Yes, my dear.

Tilda. Well, where is it? (Stamps her foot.)

Jeptha. Have you whistled for it, deary?

Tilda. Oh, don't try to be funny, Jeptha. I want that hammer and must have it. Look about your desk and see if it can

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be found.

Jeptha. (Lays aside paper and pencil and begins looking everywhere about the room for the hammer. Runs head under the type-stand, receiving a hard bump.)

Jake. More copy, here. Am clean up with you, boss

Jeptha. (Scratching head desperately.) Never mind copy. Get to work and help hunt that tack hammer.

All. (Search for the hammer.)

Tilda. (Cooly.) Jeptha, dear, do you suppose it could be found in the tool-box?

Jeptha. (Wiping his brow) That's the last place on earth I should expect to find it. (Goes to box in corner, searches and finds it) Well, I'll be hanged if that isn't the wonder of the age! Here's your hammer. (Hands it to his wife and wipes his brow again.)

Tilda. Well, I do know. (Looks at it pleased.)

Jeptha. And now Tilda, what are you going to do with the blamed thing?

Tilda. (In mock surprise) Why, nothing now. I wanted to have it ready for house cleaning next year. You know it saves confusion to take time by the fore-lock, don't you think so, Jeptha, dear?

Jake. (Convulses with laughter, twists and slaps himself vigorously as he jumps about the room.)

Jeptha. (Turns around in a desperate manner, stamps foot, claws head and exclaims in a crest-fallen tone) Just like a woman. (Returns to desk.)

Tilda. (Looks after Jeptha) What queer ways men-folks do have. [exit c

Jake. (Again becomes wrapt in amusement and laughs hard.)

Jeptha. Jake, what do you mean by laughing at me in that way? Do you expect me to put up with such as this from you and continue to pay you the weekly sum of thirty cents? Not much. Now you shuffle off that idiotic spell and go collect this account off Jones & Co.

Jake (Puts hand over mouth to conceal his mirth, takes statement and skips, bursting out in a loud laugh as he makes his exit. C.)

Jeptha. (Writes a few more words at his desk, then places

copy on case for Jake.) If ever a man needed the patience of Job and all his family, surely that man is the editor of a country news-paper. There's what would have been one of the grandest productions of the pen, (my pen at least) just literally, absolutely, tee-totally and everlastingly smashed into smithereens, and all over a confounded old five cent tack hammer that wont be used for four long months yet. However, suppose such is to be my lot But, since I come to think about it, I've got to write up that one-horse social given by the ladies, last night, at Mrs. Brown's (Sits) I wonder who will torment me this trip? Time alone can only tell. (Writes.)

Enter Jake. C.

(Goes to his case unconcernedly.)

Jeptha. Well, impudence, did you collect?

Jake. (Looks up slowly) Did you say something, boss?

Jeptha. (Madly) I asked did you collect that money?

Jake. Oh—no sir, said he wouldn't pay it.

Jeptha. (Rising quickly.) The duce he wouldn't. Did he give his reasons for not paying it?

Jake. Yes, he said he wanted it printed next to and following the regular reading matter.

Jeptha. Well, he got it. You know yourself, Jake, that I put his add between the two biggest pieces of news in the whole paper.

Jake. (Getting worked up) Well, he said it had a society scandal on one side and a divorce case on t'other, and he didn't call that pure matter at all, and he said he'd be dad-gasted if he would pay for it! (here he works up to highest pitch, emphasizing his last words by throwing his old hat to the floor forcibly.

Jeptha. Just another way these pesky skin-flint merchants have of defrauding the editor out of his hard earned currency. (starts to desk, but stops, thoughtfully) But it maddens me to think of it, and makes me feel that the best thing to do would be to thrash the lying rascal within an inch of his life: yes, and I'll go and do it, too! (Starts to go but turns back to desk and begins fumbling papers, etc.

Jake. Why don't you go, boss: you ain't fraid of him, is you?

Jeptha: Well, no, Jake, but just as I reached the door, there, I thought of his helpless wife and innocent babes, and couldn't endure the idea of breaking their hearts by crippling the old dog.

Jake: [aside] Oh, Lordy, what a lie! But then, he's one of them country editors. [Sticks type.

Jeptha. [Goes to desk.] Well; well, well; I hardly know what to write about to fill up the paper. Confound it, I wish something would happen in the neighborhood, so I do. [Walks.]

Cornstalk. [Outside] Whoa, thar, Salem! Here Jane, hold these hosses till I go in and tell Jep the news. Whoa, I tell you!

Jeptha. [Exultantly.] Ah, now if I can only get something startling to publish. [Walks about lively.]

Enter Cornstalk, R. U. E.

Jep: [Advancing] Why, hello, Brother Cornstalk! How are you coming?

Corn; Oh, jest fair to middlin, guess.

Jep: Have a seat and rest yourself.

Corn: No, haint time. Jep; old woman's out side thar waitin for me. Fact is, Jep, I just dropped in to tell you that our hull neighborhood was all—all—er—stirred up. [Goes to door and spits.]

Jep: [Aside] This is luck! Just wanted such an opportunity to give the paper a good blow-off. [To Corn.] Just step here to my desk while I'm getting paper and pencil ready and tell me all about it. What we want is the NEWS. [Steps out to center, strikes a very business-like attitude and asks] And now. farmer, what stirred your neighborhood up so, eh?

Corn: Be gosh. sir—

Jep: Yes—yes—

Corn: For the last three days—

Jep: [More excitedly] Yes, yes, tell me all. [Uneasy.]

Corn: Well, as I war goin to say. Jep, for the last three days the farmers have been———

Jep: Oh, gracious, farmer, I can see by you very countenance that your neighborhood has been undergoing one of the greatest of stirring ups, as you call it. But go on—let us know the truth—no matter who it applies to. [Restlessly.]

Corn: Yes, the farmers out thar have. for the last three days. all been a—

Jeptha. [Breathlessly] Oh—o—o—o—!

Corn: Plowing. [As the last word is said, a drum should be struck a thundering blow.]

Jep: [Falls heavily to the floor as drum sounds.]

Corn: [Laughs heartly as he makes his Exit.

Jake: [Runs to Jep, feels his pulse; runs to door and yells] Help, Help, run here quick—Jeptha's murdered—he's dying! [runs around stage in a crazy-like manner.]

Enter Tilda, C. D.

[Kneeling at Jeptha's side] Oh, my dear Jeptha! Who did this horrible crime? Speak, if only once, to your broken harted wife. Oh-o-o-o! [falls heavily across body.]

Jake: [Busies himself getting off one of Jeptha s shoes.

Enter Smith. R. 1. E.

[Running.] Here, sombody—send my paper to Oklahoma and credit me with this dollar. [Exit. L. 1. E.

Jeptha: [At the sound of the silver dollar, he springs quickly to his feet, knocking Tilda and Jake winding, runs to the desk, grabs dollar, puts it between his teeth, and looking at audience, gleefully exclaims:]

How dear to my heart is cash on subscription.
When the generous subscriber presents it to view:
But the man who won't pay, we refrain from description.
For perhaps, dear friend, [to audience] that might be you.

[starts madly toward door.]

Tilda: (Stopping) him. Where are you going, you old crazy galoot?

Jep: Oh, I'll make that old rapscallion think there's more than his neighborhood all stirred up. (Shakes fist and exits. C.

Tilda. Well, did I ever! (Turns to Jake who is getting himself together again and dusting his clothes.) Jake, you'd better follow Jep and try and get him back here before someone tries to pound some common hog-sense into that knot on his sholders No wonder he's so taken up with the news-paper business—he hasn't sense to do anything else. (Exit.)

Jake. (Looking after her.) Well, I think they'r both in the same box.

Enter. Corn.

Ha, Ha, Ha! (Holds his sides) Well, young man, where's the boss? Has he got that little epersode o'mine all rit up and sot in type by this time? Ha. Ha. Ha!

Jake: He's been too busy to do that since you left 'while ago. (Aside.) And I'm thinking he'll be still busier if they meet here again.

Corn. Well, young feller, I'm in quite a hurry, so if you'll receipt me for this dollar on my subscription. I'll be agoin. (Hands Jake the dollar and they both go to desk and become busy looking over books.)

Jeptha. (outside.) Where did he go when he turned the corner there?

Voice: I think you'll find your man inside the printing office.

Enter, Jep.

(Sees Cornstalk and Jake and thinks they are prying into his private affairs) Ah. the old scoundrel, he comes back to heap insult upon injury! But see me send his worthless soul into eternity! He'll never know what struck him—it will be done so quickly and effectually! (Grabs a club and stealthily advances behind the farmer.)

Corn: (As editor draws to strike) Thar, now, tell Jep I'll pay that much on my subscription, and that if he needs any money to help him on in his busines, just to call on me and I'll loan him a few hundred—

Jep: (Drops to the floor as drum is struck heavily. He turns a complete sumersalt this time, gets up, sees they have not observed him yet) Well, the old cuss seems to hold nothing against me—but to the contrary, he seems to want to befriend me. I must manage to avoid him untill I get my temper cooled off, so I'll just conceal myself in this box until the old fellow vamouses. (Climbs into empty box Squats down and then bobs head up.) I feel like I ought to go right up to the old fellow and beg his pardon for what I have been thinking of doing, for I am beginning to love him like a father. Oh, that money he's going to loan me. He said he would if I needed it, and of course I do, for I'm one of them editors. (Farmer moves to go and Jep drops down.)

Corn: Well' dog my cats, if I wasn't about to forget a hull bushel of pe-turnits that the old woman had me fetch in to Jeptha. I'll go and get 'em right this minute. (Exits.)

Jake: Gee Whillikens! Things are gettin ready for a blow-up here and I must do my best to avoid a catastrophe! For fear the boss comes in yet before this old codger wat's got lots of money to loan, has time to get away, I'll just step down the street and find the boss and detain him for a few minutes, to

give this old fellow a chance to go home without meeting him again. (Exit.)

Enter, Corn.

(With sack of turnips.) Well, be-gosh, that feller's skipped out without tellin me where to pour these har pe-turnips. Well I'll be gol danged if I know a better place than this old box here. (Sets sack down, unties string and empties the whole sack of turnips, covered with dirt, in on top of the editor, folds up sack and exits.)

STREET CURTAIN DROPS.

(Voices outside, hollowing, shouting and laughing at some excitement. Noise of two running rapidly.

Baker: (Outside) Halt there! Catch the vagabond! Stop the thief!

Enter Harry, the tramp.

(Followed rapidly by Baker, dressed in baking costume. They run across the stage, the tramp eating on a huge loaf of light-bread. As they disappear, a policeman, followed by boys and other, go running across the stage, following tramp and baker.)

STREET CURTAIN RISES, SHOWING PRINTING OFFICE.

(Noise of the chase heard on the outside again.)

Enter Harry, C.

(Running here and there, seeking a hiding place, finaly sees the box, and decides to hide in it. As he undertakes to get into it he pulls it toward him, upsetting it. He gets down and crawls in, during which time, Jeptha and the turnips come clambering and rolling out at the other end.)

Enter Baker, C.

(puffing and blowing wildly, sees Jeptha's feet sticking out of box, as that person is trying to extricate himself from the turnips, while the tramp is crawling in at the other end. He takes him for the tramp and goes to pull him out, dragging him across the stage before he sees his mistake. Just as the baker sees that he has the wrong man and releases his grip on him, Jeptha jumps to his feet, grabs the baker by the throat, swaying him around once or twice, throws him back ward under his arm begins to pound his mug. The baker screams, murder, murder, and the tramp jumps out of the box, runs to them, throws off his ragged coat, separating the two, saying to Jeptha.)

Harry: I beg of you, sir, not to harm a hair of that man's head.

Jep: What! you beg for this scoundrel after being chased by him to this, your hiding place?

Hary: True, sir, he has given me a hard run, but he had good reasons for running me down.

Jep: Indeed, sir! would you mind telling me those reasons?

Harry: (Wiping tear.) Ay, sir, I stole that from him which was his own. (Still weeping.)

Baker: The dirty thief, that's what he done, and I've a mind to break every bone in his infernal body, if he don't pay me instantly for my property. (Takes for the tramp but is knocked down by Jeptha.)

Jep: What, you heartless wretch. Would you strike a man while he is pleading for you?

Harry: (Pittifully.) Pray sir, have patience with him—don't abuse him. Let me tell you what a wrong I have done him.

Jeptha: (Aside.) (Well, this is one of the most misterious affairs I have been mixed up in yet. I can't understand it. This fellow has certainly commited some atrocious act toward this fresh gentleman.) (Aloud to Harry.) May I know what you have done to this fellow that he seems so bent on taking your life for it?

Harry: I stole a whole loaf of bread from his window.

Jeptha: Good Heavens, man! you don't mean to say this is all over a five cent loaf of bread, do you?

Harry: Yes sir, that's it.

Jeptha: Why, that's rediculous! A loaf of bread don't amount to anything.

Harry: Aye, sir, I am starving—have had nothing to eat, hardly, for nearly a week, and if that loaf of bread was worth as much to him as it was to me, its value cannot be estimated in this worlds goods. (Falls upon knees, looking upward with raised hands.) Ah, God in Heaven, have mercy on my wretched soul! (Weeps bitterly.)

Jeptha: (turns, points finger at baker scornfully and significantly motions him to the door; not a word to be spoken; baker drops his head and sneaks out, shaking his fist as he disappears.) Pray, sir, have you no friends near about?

Harry: (Rising and wiping eyes) It seems that I have one in pou, sir.

Jeptha: You have relatives living in this country have you not?

Harry: Indeed, kind sir, I have neither relatives nor home in this world. The only child of poor but honest parents, I was left penniless and homeless, only a few years ago. My mother had been left a widow three months after I saw the light of this troublesome, sorrowful world. I grew up to love and cherish her and was her only support, and God knows, I did my best for her; but, alas, as we were getting a small footing in this life, it pleased the Almighty Father in Heaven that we should be separated in this world by that horrible, dreadful Johnstown Flood, which we all remember but too well. (Weeps.) The last time I looked upon my dear old mother's face, was on the night of that dreadful accident, as she knelt by my bed-side, praying for her only child. She was swept away as were hundreds of others: Our little home—there was never a piece of it seen to be recognized again. Since then, I have been roaming from one place to another—no place to call my home. No one to look upon as a friend. No kind word to cheer me on. No one to pray for me as my weary head was rested upon the bare ground or floor of an empty house or car! (Weeps bitterly.)

Voices, Outside.

Singing a few words of 'Home, Sweet Home.'

Harry: Ah, God in Heaven, why am I to have the last thread of my heart torn asunder by that sorrowful, yet truthful song, at such a time as this? It is to much! I cannot stand it—it's too much, too much! (Staggers. Jeptha catches him and holds him while curtain falls.)

———o———

ACT II.

SCENE 1. Street in New York.

Enter, Jeptha and wife, Tilda.

(Carrying valises, packages, umbrellas, etc., each gazing about in a lost way, saunter along to center of stage and stop.)

Jeptha: Matilda, I think we are on the right street this time, my dear.

Tilda: That's what you've been saying nigh on to a week, now, every time we get into a new lane.

Jep: Oh, well now, Matilda, you must learn to have patience if you are going to remain an editor's wife.

Tilda: Yes, and also learn to live on wind, I suppose.

Jep: (Fretfully.) Come, now, Matilda, you know we are all right if I only make the deal that I am now in New York City to close.

Tilda: Yes, there's that old life-time companion of yours—"if"—it's been "if" this and "if" that, until I'm just about "iffed" out.

Jep: There now, dear, let's not have any more of this; let's find that fellows office and make the deal.

Tilda: Well now see here, Jeptha Sponghead: I've just traced around after you in search of that feller's office until I am just tee totally fagged out again—and as we've made this our lunch time every day since we first landed in this blamed town, wat's biggern all our hull state put together, I am just goin to hunker down right here and eat a snack. And I'll tell you another thing, Jeptha, these har biscuits and bacon are gettin awfull scarce and tough, to say nothing about the coal-dust and coal-cinders that's settled in 'em since we've been here. You know we have paced up and down every blamed lane in this town. (She spread out a shawl. Unrolls a package of bread and meat. Goes to chewing a piece. Jeptha does likewise.)

Enter, Policeman.

Hello! A couple of vagrants—or crooks.

Tilda: (Pulling at a piece of meat.) Jeptha, maybe that railroad conductor coming there can tell you how to find the place we'er looking for.

Jep: (Looks at cop, but says nothing as the latter approaches and gazes at them.)

Pol: (Aside.) Two escaped lunatics, I'll bet. Well, I'll let them have their way in every thing, but will manage, however, to get them in safe quarters. (Speaks to Jep.) Hello, there, pard! Where you bound for?

Tilda: He's trying to find his nephew's office; do you know where it is?

Pol: Why, certainly, I know. Come with me and we'll find it within ten minutes. (To audience.) Just as I sized it up.

Jep: (Jumps up in an airy way, lays hand on cops shoulder.) Now see here, because my wife has addressed you, unthoughtedly,

in this simple way, instead of saying we were on our way to the office of Mr. Robert Massey Anderson Gillespie McFadden Sanderson, who, by the way, is a nephew of mine—I say now, because she has expressed hereself in such an unsophisticated manner, don't take us for a couple of wandering luna's.

Pol: (Winks at audience in a knowing way.) Ah, you don't mean to say that gentleman you just spoke of is your nephew?

Jep: Yes sir—that's what I mean. (Goes to getting his traps ready for marching.)

Pol: Well, I beg pardon for anything I have done to injure your feelings, but to better mend them, allow me the privilege of conducting you to the office of Mr. Sanderson, which is just around the corner here. (Aside.) That'll fetch 'em.

Jep: That's more like it, my friend. Come, my dear, our weary hunting and marching is about over. (They both get in marching order and the three start off.)

Pol: (To audience) Its my duty to take care of such harmless wanderers when they escape this way, yet, I feel sorry for the poor things, after all. (Exit.)

SCENE II.

(Street curtain rises showing the interior of a neatly fitted office. Robert and Charles seated at different tables.)

Chas: Robert, it seems to me your uncle is a long time getting here. Didn't you say he left his home seven days ago?

Robt: Yes, Mr. Brandon, he undoubtedly boarded a train at his place just seven days ago, and should have been here five days ago. I can't understand it, sir.

Chas: Well, if the old gent dont show up pretty soon, you'l have to abandon the idea of exchanging places with him. (Walks toward his desk.)

Robt: But see here, Mr. Brandon, I have went to a lot of trouble and expense in getting ready for a change of some kind, and even if my uncle does not come to take my place, I feel that I shall have to go from the city a short time anyhow. My poor health demands that I do something for a change.

Chas: Well, we'll wait a day or two more, and if he does not show up by that time———

Enter, Josh, the servant.

Chas: Well, Josh what's the rumpus?

Josh: A letter for Mr. Robert here. (Delivers letter to Robt. and waits.)

Robt: (Reads quickly) What? Can this be true?

Chas: What now—a letter from the old man?

Robt: (Evasively) Er-er-no sir- -it's from-er- another party. [Aside] Oh, hang the luck. It is from uncle, and he says by means unknown to him, he and auntie have been taken for a couple of escaped lunatics, and are now in the asylum waiting for instructions fron relatives: and he wants me to come at once and get them out of the place. Oh, this is dreadful! I must not let Mr. Brandon know anything about this or my pleasure trip will be knocked in the head.

Josh: Be there an answer?

Robt: No, you may go. [To Chas.] Mr. Brandon, I will be gone for a few seconds. [Puts on coat and hat and exits.]

Chas: I'll bet he's heard from that country uncle of his-probably in the lock up and needs money to pay his way out. Well, I've got business out a few hours, may be I can run across them. [Exits.]

[Jep outside, as Robert's head appears at door.] Say, Bob, I'm a mind to give this deal up right now, for blamed if ever I was taken up for a crazy man befor I struck this dog-gone town.

Enter Robert. C. D.

[Followed by Jep.] Oh, no, uncle, you must not think of doing such a thing. My arrangements are all made, and we must go right on and make the best of the bargain.

Jep: Well, I'll grin and bear it-but it's all for your sake, Bob-no one else—[looks around] But look here, where's Tilda, where's my dear? [Runs to door and looks out—evidently sees her down the street, as he commences holloing at the top of his voice.] Hi, there, you raw-boned, knock-kneed, cross-eyed, rubber-neck descendant of the devil, quit your pestering that lady—she's my wife. Do you heah? [Noise of several persons laughing and guying the old woman, one voice yelling several times—"Say, old Gyp, can't you tell us our fortunes?" Leads Tilda in, who looks somewhat lost and bewildered, as she sizes up the elegant office.]

Robt: This way, folks, and be seated. [Points to chairs.]

Tilda: [Looking around, very much taken in with the appearances.] Well, Bobbie, your nicely fixed up here. Where's the office?

Robt: [Somewhat vexed.] Why, this is my office, right here. Here's my desk and there's the business manager's over there.

Tilda: [Excitedly.] You don't mean to tell me that your helping to run the American Farmer, and then say that this nice little parlor is your office, do you?

Robt: Why, certainly, auntie. that's what I mean.

Tilda: Well, where's your washington and other printing materials?

Robt: (Bewildered.) Where's my what?

Tilda: Your Washington printing press—you don't print a paper without a press do you?

Robt: Why, auntie, of course we don't get along without a press. But you see, the press department, like the folding, mailing, counting, composing. proofing and other departments, are all separate—this whole block of buildings here is used for our printing and publishing business.

Tilda: Well, that's the biggest piece of extravagance I ever heard of. (Sits down very suddenly.)

Robt: Indeed, auntie, it's necessary to have all these convenient arrangements for without them it would be utterly impossible to run such a large paper as the American Farmer.

Tilda: (Jumps up madly.) Don't try to stuff that kind of nonsense down me—don't my Jeptha, there, run a paper down in Missouri?

Robt: I have been so informed.

Tilda: Well, I KNOW he does—and I also know he has his entire plant, very nicely and conveniently, as you say, all arranged in one 10x12 ft. room.

Robt. (Astonished.) Why, uncle, can auntie be telling the truth? Is your office no larger than that?

Jeptha: (Somewhat bothered.) Well. she's right about the whole plant being in one room. but (looks uneasily at his wife, who begins to clinch her fist and show signs of angryness.) but she's mistaken altogether, about the size of the- -

Tilda: (Rising and shoving her fist under Jeptha's nose.) See here. Jep. don't I know what I'm talking about when I've been livin right over that office ever since constable Newton put us out of that other one? And didn't I measure it just last week for that new rag carpet we're goin to get on subscription? Don't

tell me I'm mistakened! (Walks off to one side and blows nose on apron.)

Chas: (While above is taking place, comes to C. E. behind them and stands looking in, somewhat amused.)

Jep: (In an explanitory way:) Oh, well, Bob, you needn't be afraid to go down and take charge of the office. You'll find it all handily arranged in one room –yet, there's plenty of room to get around in –consequedtly, you may know it is not such a small room as the old woman pictures it.

Chas: (Stepping in.) Well, Robert, what have you here? One of our million rural subscribers? (Sets eye-glass and gazes first at Jeptha and then at Tilda and vice versa.)

Robt: (Turns around excitedly. Shows surprise and is troubled over the matter. Looks at audience bewilderingly.) Now I AM in in it. [Bites lips and twists around nervously] Oh, I could make it alright if auntie wasn't here –she'll spoil everything. [Turns to avoid Chas.]

Chas: [Sternly.] I say, Robert, can't you attend to the wants of these two creatures and get rid of them?

[At this instance, a mighty alarm of fire is sounded outside, by striking two or three steel gongs. At the same time, voices are heard crying: Fire! Fire! FIRE!

Jep: [Makes a dash for the door, followed by Tilda, who grabs his coat-tail as he disappears.]

Chas. and Robert go to door, look out, and then return to center of stage, laughing loudly.]

Robt: Why, er – you asked, I believe, who those people are?

Chas: I don't care so much who they were now, since they are out and gone. [Goes to desk.]

Robt: Oh, well they were a couple of country folks—alright, of course, but a little green.

Chas: Well, I am obliged to step down to the mailing room a few minutes, so you'll please remain here till I return, Robert.

Robt; I declare, I got out of that pretty easily, after all. But I must see that they both don't get in here again untill things are arranged. [Rings bell.]

Enter Josh. C. E.

Robt: Josh, have a cab at the door within five minutes.

Josh: [Bows and Exits. C. E.]

Enter Jeptha and Tilda. C. D.

[Puffing, blowing, and wiping the perspiration from their faces.]

Jeptha: [Between breaths.] That fire was undoubtedly out in the country a mile or two, for I run myself down and then lost sight of that alarm wagon that went helter-skilter down the street.

Robt: [Trys to avoid laughing but has to hold his sides.]

Tilda: [Still blowing.] It,s my opinion that it was some one burning a brush heap.

Robt: (Composedly.) Why, auntie, that fire might have been ten miles from here and yet have been a house, or may be a whole block, burning in this city. But, never mind the fire. I have a carriage waiting to convey you to a pleasant home, where you are to remain while uncle takes my place in the office here this winter. Come. I know you are tired out. (Leads her to door.) Good-by: uncle and I will be there in a few hours. (Turns around to Jeptha.) Well, uncle, I want you to step in to my private room here and put on a suit of clothes I have prepared for you especially for this occassion.

Jep: See here, Bob, I fear we'll have to abandon this matter-your boss made remarks here a while ago that made my very blood boil with deep humiliation-to say nothing of the indignities he——

Robt: Oh, see here, uncle, that's just what I'm after fixing up right now. You step in here, put on the clothes I have for you, assume a very dignified appearance, and he'll just fall in love with you--thereby making our little exchange deal a grand success. You'll learn all about the life of a city editor, and I will have the pleasurable experience of a country news-paper publisher. See? (Both exit.)

Enter Chas. C. D.

(Looks around for Robert.) Why, I told Robert to remain here until I returned, and here I find the office alone——

Robt: (In room.) I'm right in here, Mr. Brandon, helping my uncle straighten himself up—he's had a long journey, you know.

Chas: Ah, that uncle of his has realy come, eh? I'm sorry for it. Yet, I guess I'll have to make the best of the bargain. (Sits at desk.)

Enter Robt and Jep. R. 1. E.

(Jep being dressed in long tail coat, fine, low-cut vest, silk hat, loud pants, etc., and wearing eye-glass same as Brandon.)

Robt: Mr. Brandon, allow me to introduce to you my uncle, Mr. Jeptha Spongehead, from Missouri.

Chas: (Bows and scrapes wonderfully polite, while Jep steps up to shake hands with him.

Jep: (Extends hand) Glad to meet you, Mr. Brand-iron—glad to meet you.

Chas: (Does not see his hand but turns and sits at desk and becomes busy. Jeptha does not like it, but says nothing.)

Chas: (In rough manner.) Robert, show your uncle his desk, explain to him his duties as my clerk, and then you may depart on your journey. (Resumes writing.)

Robt: (Goes to desk.) Here, uncle, you will find instructions in this envelope which I have written for you, sparing no pains to make everything plain to you. And now, I will bid you a happy good-bye. (Shakes hands.) I will not see auntie before I leav, so you tell her good-bye for me, and say—uncle, make some excuse to keep her from visiting you here—(Laughs in a knowing way) you understand it, eh? (Points to Chas.)

Jeptha: Good-by, Bob. Be careful of contracts you make with Jones and Company they're death on possitions next to pure reading matter.

Robt: Oh, never fear—I'm on to that kind of business. I'll bring your paper out in city style in a few weeks. [Exits.]

Jep: [Looks first at audience and then at Brandon, still wearing the big hat Robt. had him to put on.] Well, I guess I'm in for it—I wish to goodness I was back in Missouri interviewing my old friends—

Chas: (Crossly.) About how many years do you think it will take you to learn to be of some value to the office here—eh? (Looks at him through his glass.)

Jep: (Looking at him in an innocent way.) About as many as it would take you to learn to run a common country news-paper. (Returns same gaze that Chas gave him.)

Chas: (Turning to desk, quickly.) Oh, bosh!

Jep: That's what I think about it.

Chas: (Snappingly.) What's that? Do you dare insult me, sir?

Jep: (To audience.) This will never do: I must go and hunt up Tilda and get out of this aristocratic place. Yes, I must: if I don't I'll be guilty of murder in less than six hours. I wonder, though, if they'd hang a man for killing one of those things?

Enter Josh. C. D.

(With card on tray.)

Chas: This way, Josh: what have you? (Looks at card.) Take it to that. (Points to Jeptha.)

Jep: (To audience.) Ah, he's going to see if I'm of any value to the office. Well, I'll manage this little affair just as though I'd been in the business a life-time. (Takes card, looks at it, tests the strength, assume a business-like air, and says.) How many do you want and what grade of cards shall we print 'em on? Do you want plain or round corners, squar or beveled—white or gilded?

Chas: (Turns from his desk and becomes deeply interested in Jep's actions.)

Josh: Sir, what do you mean by all those questions?

Jep: I merely want to ascertain the kind of a job of card printing you want done.

Chas: (Laughing loudly.) Josh, tell him that card was sent up by some one that wants to interview him. Ha, Ha, Ha! This is great!

Jep: (Aside.) Oh, how I wish I was back in Missouri. (Turn to servant.) Bud, I will go down with you to see that feller, but in my country, they always come right into my office to see me. (Gets up and starts to go.)

Chas: Ha, Ha, Ha! (Takes hold of Jep.) Hold on, Missouri: allow the servant to show the gentleman up—you needn't go down.

Jep: (Jerking away madly.) Why not go down? or UP I'd rather go anywhere than remain up here in the same cage with an animal like you.

Chas: (Shaking fist.) You have insulted every bit of the noble blood that courses through my veins, and you shall suffer for it sir—do you hear?

Josh: (To audience.) There's going to be trouble here. I'll just have an officer in readiness. (Exits.)

Jep: [Aside.] Noble blood, nothing: I'll bet there aint enough

blood of any kind in him to interest an ordinary Missouri bed-bug two minutes: [Aloud.] Oh, if I only back in Missouri and had you there with me——my fortune would be made.

Chas: [Fiercly·] What? You dare address me in such terms, you back-woods specimen of humanity?

Jep: Missouri can stand anything but that! [In a rage, he lays off hat & coat as they begin to dodge one another, rolls up sleevs and makes a dash for Chas. Jep finally catches him, makes his coat-tail "crack the air" as he swings him around and brings him to his knees. Then straddles his neck and begins to pound his head, after which, he grabs the card tray and begins spanking Chas. rapidly, while he kicks vigorously and curtain drops.]

Scene, Street.

Enter Jeptha.

[Carrying his grips, umberella, linen duster, hat, etc., walks to opposite side of stage, looking back just as policeman enters after him. They both run out and soon appear on entrance side again, running pretty lively, Jep, having dropped every thing but his linen duster. They disappear and come through again just as fast as their legs can carry them. Jep giving a deafening yell just as he clears the stage, policeman close at his heels.

QUICK CURTAIN.

——o——

ACT III.

SCENE: Room in Cornstalk's home. Table in the corner, iron safe in opposite. Two chairs and other suitable property. Supposed to be dark, one light burning on table. Foot-lights all out.]

Enter Cornstalk.

[Throwing aside his over-coat, wraps, etc.] Well, I've had a long wearisome trip to-day, but I disposed of my cattle at a reasonable price and having got the cash for 'em, of course, feel pretty well satisfied. I think——

Wifes voice.

[Outside.] John, supper's ready.

Corn: All right, Jane——be there in a minute or two. [Loud knocking at door.] Come in.

Enter Jep.

[In tatters.]

Corn: [Much alarmed.] Well. Gee Whillikens. Jeptha. be this you or your dead twin brother. eh? [Advances slowly with extended hand.]

Jep: It's me, farmer. it's me: don't become alarmed at my clothes--the result of an unfortunate encounter with a tramp whose pugilistic knowledge and bodily strength so greatly out done mine as to enable him to use some very extraordinary persuasive power toward me.

Corn: [Opening his eyes wide and staring at Jep.] You don't mean to say you have been robbed of your own clothes?

Jep: Oh. no. no. the fellow didn't rob me--he just gave me an actual lesson in the charitable act. called. "giving and receiving."

Corn: Strange. indeed.

Jep: Yes. he received my clothes and gave me these. [Looks at clothes attentively.]

Corn: Well. I'll be hanged.

Jep: No. he's the man that will be hanged if he goes on in this business.

Corn: Well. never mind the matter. Jep. Come in and have supper with me. I'm glad you're getting back to old Missouri again.

Jep: I'm much obliged to you. farmer. but I must decline as I am expected home to-night. and if I don't push on. Matilda will be uneasy about me. Fact is. farmer. I want to borrow three hundred dollars: you told Jake you had it to spare me if I needed it. and of course. you wont dispute the fact that I need it now. eh?

Corn: Well. I should ex-quivercate to say you needed something. Yes. Jep. I have the money for you. Jest be seated till I unlock the safe and get it. [Goes to safe and fumbles a few seconds. getting up saying:] By the way. need not go to the trouble of opening the safe--I've just got the three hundred here that I received to-day for a bunch of cattle which I drove up town and sold to Mose Hayes. [Finds roll of bills and gives to Jeptha:] There. now. old boy--jes keep the interest paid up and use it as long as you want to.

Jep: [Putting it in pocket.] Thank you very much. but I will need it only a short time and will soon return it to you. [To audience.] I don't think.

Corn: Very well. Now come in to supper with me.

Jep: As I said before, farmer, I have not a minute to loose. [Gives hand.] Good-by for the present—come up and see me when convenient. [Exits C. D.]

Corn. Well, poor Jep: he looks like he'd been takin in the sights of New York—in fact, looks like he'd brung some of 'em home with him. [Turns light down and exits. R 2. E]

Enter Burglars.

[Two burglars, masked, they steadily draw revolvers, a dark lantern and a few tools. Look all around, decide that everything is O. K. and proceed to crack the safe. One keeps watch, the other goes to drilling on the safe door. A noise is made outside. They jump toward the door with drawn revolvers. No other interference, they proceed with the work and blow open the safe, draw a bunch of keys quickly, open drawer in safe, grab a roll of money and make for the door, at this instance the farmer runs in shoots twice, the last burglar is seen to drop a pistol as he disappears. Farmer runs and picks it up, also something else, goes to light, looks and discovers it to be a little finger which he has shoot off.]

Corn: Be gosh—he got my money and I got his finger; but no time must be lost—I must go in pursuit at once. I'll have the officers sent in every direction [Runs off as street curtain drops.]

SCENE II. STREET.

Enter Constable. R.

Enter Harry. L.

[They meet and shake hands.]

Constable: This is the luckiest meeting I've had with you since you were appointed my deputy.

Harry: Yes—what's up?

Constable: A farmer three miles north of here was robbed tonight—not two hours ago—burglars entered his rooms, blowed the safe, got his money—some three hundred dollars and one promissory note for two hundred.

Harry: Any other clues to work on?

Constable: Yes, the best one I ever heard of. [Feels in pocket] This finger here was shot from the hand of one of the fellows by the farmer. I'll keep the finger, but you can remember it and be guided in your arrest thereby. Now you go east of town and I'll take the west road—keep your eyes open and be careful they

don't run a surprise on you and lay you out. So long. Remember the finger. [Exit, L.]

Harry: Well, this is what suits me—I'll show that officer that I am on to my job when it comes to catching criminals. But, by the way, I heard that my old friend and protector, the editor, is expected home to-night, and I am so anxious to see him and learn if he's forgotten the lad who stole the loaf of bread and was defended by him in his office. He will hardly recognize me, I am thinking. But to my duty. I must win honors to-night. [Exit, R.] As street curtain rises.]

SCENE III.

A road through a forest. No lights. Everything showing appearance of a lonely spot in the woods at mid-night.

Enter Jep.

[Trudging along slowly as if feeling his way in the dark. Two fellows are concealed behind rocks. They draw revolvers.] Slow traveling, but it's only a mile or less more to go, and I'll be home once more. No wonder that poor harmless tramp was so affected at hearing that old heart-stirring song—"Home Sweet——

Burglars: [Jump at him with drawn revolvers, calling out:] Who are you, and where are you going, you sneaking cur—

Jep: [Trying to keep away from the one who advances toward him.] Oh! you know me—you are the scoundrel that robbed me of my clothes twelve hours ago and now you shall return them. [Throws down valise and makes for the burglar.] [Burglar dodges by, and as he starts to run, shoots back at Jep. The latter grabs his hand [his own hand] examine his wound, howling with pain. Just then a shot is heard near entrance, as last burglar starts out. He is dragged back by constable, who runs, dragging burglar to editor. Draws revolver on him and commands him to surrender. Hand-cuffs him and turns to Jep. Examines hand and finds it bleeding, being minus little finger.]

Constable: So you got the farmer's money if you did loose a finger, did you? Well, we'll see that you get something else—about ten years, for instance

Jep: Sir, you talk in riddles. I don't understand what you're driving at.

Constable: None of your fooling! Up with your hands and be searched. [Goes through pockets, finding $300.] Ah, where did you get that?

Jep: I - I - I got it from a friend in the country, only a few

hours ago; he loaned it to me, sir.

Constable: Quite kind, wasn't he? Well you're the man I want. One finger off, $300 in cash and a note— which I havn't got yet, but will proceed to get. [Hand-cuffs editor, and goes toward burglar.]Hold up, here— where's that note, you vagabond ——out with it—Oh, you're other wise engaged with your hands. Well, I'll help you. [Searches and finds note.]

Jep: Sir, there's some mistake here; that man and his partner who ran away when you came up, had already robbed me of my clothes, and were in the act of assulting me again as you came up. I have done nothing against the law.

Constable: Very nice, reasonable story, indeed. [Turns to burglar.] What were you and your partner shooting at as I came up, eh?

Burg: He [points to Jeptha] refused to divide up that $300 you just found on him.

Constable: A nice partner you have, indeed. Well, I'll put you both where you'll have no more quarrels like this.

Jep: I protest against such atrocious scheming against an innocent man. I never saw that rogue before untill to-day when he and his partner robbed me of my clothes, and as far as robbing any one, I never——

Constable: Oh, draw in your wind and make tracks toward town. [Pulls him out and makes them walk before him.]

Jep: Yes, but my poor Matilda.

Constable: Never mind Matilda or Martha Ann, or anyone else. March!

Jep: [As he walks out.] In old Missouri once more.

SCENE V.

Printing office—same as first. Robt. seated at table resting face in hands. Jake walking up and down stage with bowed head

Jake: I say, Robert, there is something wrong about this matter. I can never believe that Jeptha committed that robbery. (Continues to walk.)

Robert: (Rising.) I am just like you, Jake; yet there is such a chain of circumstantial evidence linked around him, that I fear we shall have a hard time getting him out of it.

Jake: Well, I'm in favor of doing all we possibly can, and that at once, for you know this law business costs money and——

Enter Constable.

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